

Listen

A Seeker's Resource for Spiritual Direction

A P R I L 2 0 1 4

V O L 8 : I S S U E 2

TRANSFORMATION EMERGES

It was my long week of anniversaries: an adoption date, a wedding anniversary for a marriage that ended in divorce, and the eighth anniversary of my teenage son's death by suicide. Annually, when this week cycles, I have learned to lean-in and ride the emotional wave, taking care of my tenderized heart. I do not know what to expect; it is a practice of being present.



Secretary Bird — *Sagittarius serpentarius*

On Tuesday evening, I received a call from my boss, the superintendent of schools, telling me a teen had died by suicide in Seward, Alaska. Our school district team kicked into gear to provide service and support for staff, students, and families. Two intense days passed, and I knew I'd made healthy, helpful contributions to schools in the town a hundred miles away. Thursday, it was confirmed I needed to go to Seward, for an 8:00 a.m. appointment with a film crew on Friday—the same day as Justin's death anniversary; he had died when he was sixteen. There was no way out, I had to do it.

Everything in me resisted the two-hundred mile round-trip drive, on a dark unlit two-lane road, in icy winter conditions. I recalled Richard Rohr's wisdom, "If we cannot find a way to make our wounds into sacred wounds, we invariably become negative or bitter—because we will be wounded. All suffering is potentially redemptive, all wounds are potentially

sacred wounds. It depends on what you do with them." I would go and also visit our principals and their schools. It wasn't about the film crew, a bigger mystery was unfolding.

I left my home at 6:00 a.m. with a passenger—my fourteen week old Labrador retriever pup, curled up next to me on the seat. No moon, it was pitch dark. Miles and miles passed. I turned off the music; the rhythm of swishing windshield wiper blades remained. Memories flitted—one in particular that changed my life.

A few weeks after Justin died, Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi arrived for a talk to spiritual directors in Denver, Colorado, USA. He came straight to me and wrapped me in his arms. He said, "I've just learned your son died ... tonight we will pray for his new guides ..." Numb with grief, a light pierced my confusion: if Justin had guides, then *heaven* couldn't be static, a place of arrival. A Catholic, I understood I

had mistakenly constricted God and the *afterlife* into a static place and landscape.

I'd driven nearly two hours. Indigo blue light revealed black silhouettes of towering trees and jagged mountains. Mist and fog swirled. Suddenly I was aware that my destination, at the end of the road, was the town at the head of *Resurrection Bay*. Tears tickled my nose and eyes. I would park at our schools and be present to the stories and grief of these people, in this time. Unseen grace and years of redemptive suffering guided me. I thought of Matt Licada's words, "You are wedded to the unknown now, and you are willing to give your heart to others and to this world—to use even your sadness, your hopelessness, and your aloneness to connect with others, allowing yourself to be crafted as a wild translucent vessel of kindness."

—Pegge Erkeneff

SEEDS OF INTEREST:

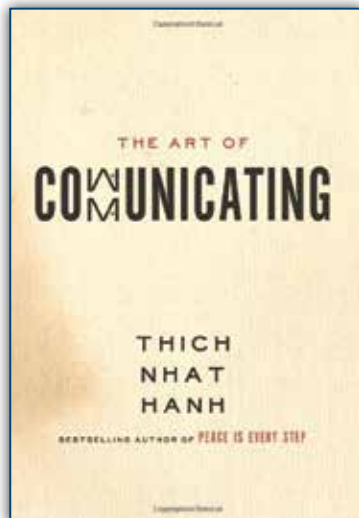
🍄 Book Review: *The Art of Communicating*

🍄 Global Resources

🍄 Field Guide:
Transformation is possible

🍄 Ask Owl

BOOK REVIEW



***The Art of Communicating* by Thich Nhat Hanh**

New York, NY: Harper One, 2013
176 pages, CAD\$28.99, GBPE10.99,
USD\$25.99

The Art of Communicating is as significant of a book as was *Peace is Every Step*, nearly three decades ago. Composed in nine chapters, the words gently call the reader home into self, mindfulness, and expression with loving speech, when difficulties

arise, at the workplace, and in community. Practices for compassionate community are included, together with the insight that our communication is our legacy or karma.

A foundation in the book is the invitation: "Please do come back home and listen. If you don't communicate well with

yourself, you cannot communicate well with another person. Come back again and again and communicate lovingly with yourself. That is the practice. You have to go back to yourself and listen to the happiness you may have in this moment; listen to the suffering in your body and in your mind, and learn how to embrace it and bring relief" (22).

Six mantras of loving speech are offered, along with reflections of how to practice them mindfully. "I am here for you" (73); "I know you are there, and I am very happy" (75); "I know you suffer, and that is why I am here for you" (77); "I suffer, please help" (79); "This is a happy moment" (82); and "You are partly right" (83). The reader is reminded time and again that nothing is more precious than presence, and, "If you want to help society, your community, your country, you have to have a home base" (90).

"Every time we communicate, we either produce more compassion, love, and harmony or we produce more suffering and violence" (139). Everyone can benefit from this book. Listening is an art, and Thich Nhat Hanh is a master guide. 🌿

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of educational events including a
conference with Richard Rohr, OFM,
Roshi Joan Halifax, Eve Ilse, and
Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi,
institutes, pilgrimage, and contemplative
retreats. Registration at
www.sdiworld.org

May 20, 2014

"How to Seek and Find a Spiritual Director"

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we experience the landscapes and rhythms
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mystic, poet, healer, and spiritual director.
Explore how the paths of the monk and
artist can become doorways to interfaith
companioning and the greening power of the
Divine Presence in our lives.

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Michael Morwood

July 30—Aug 6 *A Window to Heaven:
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Brother Michael Moran, CP

Aug 18—23 *Mothers, Sisters and Daughters: Standing
on Their Shoulders*
Edwina Gateley

Aug 24—31 *Creating (Greater) Consciousness of Our
Connectedness in the Cosmic Christ*
Fr. Michael Crosby, OFMCap



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FIELD GUIDE

TRANSFORMATION IS POSSIBLE

"At times a broken heart will appear as your teacher, and you will be asked to practice the most radical yogas of sadness and vulnerability. At times you may see that the yoga of a broken heart is the highest path for you and will ask that you set aside all others, placing your tenderness, your aloneness, and the scary places upon the altar in front of you.

Allow yourself to be the great yogini of the broken heart, for it may be why you have come here—to feel the longing and the burning of this world, to hold and metabolize it inside the grace field of your own body, and to shower beings everywhere with your wisdom and your love." – Matt Licata

REFLECT

Set aside thirty minutes. Gather paper and pen. You will slowly read the text aloud four times in order to allow insight and vulnerability to ripple in you. The following questions can guide each new reading.

Breathe quietly for two or more minutes.

REVEAL

In this moment, what do you notice, hear, feel? Make a note of what moves you.

What opens in you? Feel the emotion and thought in your body, heart, mind. Reflect and represent your insight on paper, then place your hands on your body where you feel most vulnerable. Breathe for a minute or more.

This time, allow the meaning and insight to penetrate into your *aloneness* and the *grace field of your body*. What do you desire to express and place upon the *altar in front of you*? Write or draw on paper if you are moved to do so. Breathe.

Read the text one last time. Be still, aware of your inhalation, and exhalation of every breath. Listen to what emerges within you. When you are ready, take several deep breaths, and shake your body: arms, legs, feet, hips, shoulders. Wiggle for sixty seconds.

Conclude by recording any insights you want to recall, and give thanks for your hidden support in the words of your own choosing. ✍

Listen

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W W W . S D I W O R L D . O R G

Listen is an outreach publication of Spiritual Directors International. When you visit the SDI website at **www.sdiworld.org**, you can learn about retreats, programs, conferences, and other educational events related to spiritual companionship. You can read descriptions of the spiritual direction relationship from a variety of spiritual traditions,

and discover excellent questions to ask yourself and any potential spiritual directors you choose to interview. To locate a spiritual director or guide, go online to *Seek and Find Guide: A Worldwide Resource of Available Spiritual Directors*. More than 5,000 spiritual directors are listed by geographical location at **www.sdiworld.org**. ✍

Mariandale Retreat Conference CENTER

Lift the Spirit

Summer Retreats 2014

JUNE

Artists' Contemplative Retreat

Facilitator: Rose Amodeo Pertronella
Thursday, June 5 – Thursday, June 12

Always Gifts

Presenters: Gaynell Cronin and Jack Rathschmidt, OFM Cap.
Sunday, June 8 – Friday, June 13

Re-envisioning the Second Half of Life

Presenters: Maria and Michael Morwood
Sunday, June 15 – Saturday, June 21

Encountering the Gospel Again for the First Time

Presenter: Mary Schneiders, OP
Sunday, June 22 – Thursday, June 26

Dance of Divine Intimacy: Mutual Knowing and Loving

Presenter: Don Bisson, FMS
Thursday, June 26 – Sunday, June 29

Directed Retreat

Directors: Aedan McKeon, OP, Nancy Erts, OP, and Judy Schiavo
Sunday, June 29 – Saturday, July 5

New Window of Opportunity

Presenter: Beverly Musgrave
Sunday, June 29, 6:00 pm – Friday, July 4, 11:00 am

JULY

Heart Themes in Matthew's Gospels

Presenter: Michael H. Crosby, OFM Cap
Saturday, July 5 – Wed. July 9

Crafters' and Quilters' Retreat: Postcards Tell Our Stories

Prayer Facilitator: Nancy Erts, OP
Craft Instructor: Patricia Werner
Wednesday, July 9 – Sunday, July 13

Restore the Soul

Women's Retreat: Wise Women of the Word; Healing the World

Presenter: Nancy Erts, OP
Sunday, July 13 – Saturday, July 19

Men's Retreat: Real Men Pray

Presenter: Patrick Cleary-Burns
Sunday, July 13 – Saturday, July 19

Directed Retreat

Directors: Francis Gargani, CSsR and team members
Sunday, July 27 – Sunday, August 3

AUGUST

Finding a Living Faith; Revisiting the Creed

Presenter: Mary Schneiders, OP
Sunday, August 3 – Friday, August 8

The Heart Cave: Deepening the Journey Within

Presenter: Michael Laratonda, FMS
Sunday, August 10 – Saturday, August 16

Christians Evolving Faithfully as the Universe

Presenters: Carol DeAngelo, SC and Nancy Erts, OP
Sunday, August 17 – Friday, August 22

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ASK OWL

Question: I am suffering from the loss and disappointment of a significant relationship. I realize that past losses are resurging, and although I feel a resistance to deal with this, simultaneously I want to choose a new path to integration and wholeness, shifting anger, blame, and pain. I also want to understand where God is present and absent in my experience. Would a spiritual director assist me?



of a man or woman who listens with compassion. A spiritual director brings tenderness and a capacity to resonate with your desire to notice how God is present and seemingly absent in your experience. A mighty chasm can be healed when we lean into our lived experience and trust the process from unlive healing into transformation. A path to peace is the willingness to explore all

the places which dwell within us, recognition of our own vulnerability, and perhaps the accompaniment of a vast grace or field of love seeking our wholeness. A spiritual director is trained to be a sacred companion to our soul and process along the journey, and is here for you. 

—If you have a question for Owl, please e-mail Listen@sdiworld.org.

Hoot Hoot: Yes, a spiritual companion can accompany you! Sometimes we discover we simply need to hear our own voice, and deepest grief, suffering, or aloneness—in the presence



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— Most Rev. Michael J. Sheehan, Archbishop of Santa Fe





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“Tending the holy around the world and across traditions ...

Al servicio de lo sacro alrededor del mundo y a través de las tradiciones ...”

—Translated by Marta Rios and Xavier Ortiz Monasterio



spiritual directors international

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Everyone seeking a journey into the heart
of a sacred “thin” place is welcome.



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